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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 001191

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/WATERS, USAID
FOR WARD/DUNN/RAGLAND

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: GAZA UPDATE: 1800 LOCAL JUNE 13: HAMAS PRESSURES
PASF BASES; 2 UNRWA STAFF KILLED

REF: JERUSALEM 1186 AND PREVIOUS

1. (SBU) Summary. Interfactional violence continued in Gaza June 13, with at least 16 Palestinians killed since 1200 local. Most fighting involved Hamas military-wing/8Executive Force8 attacks against Palestinian security forces (PASF) installations and homes/offices of senior Fatah leaders and PASF commanders. Shooting continues in Gaza City and central Gaza as of 1700 local. Hamas reportedly destroyed a Preventive Security (PSO) base in Khan Yunis and took over a National Security Forces (NSF) position there. Unknown gunmen shot and killed two local UNRWA staff in Gaza City mid-day on June 13. UNRWA has temporarily suspended its operations in the Gaza Strip. Both Hamas and Fatah forces have set up checkpoints in major cities and highways, but according to all reports, Hamas dominates most critical routes. Fatah militants in Nablus and Ramallah kidnapped at least 13 Hamas members and are reportedly threatening to kill them in retaliation for deaths of Fatah members in Gaza. End summary.

Gaza City and North Gaza

2. (SBU) Local Gaza contacts report that Gaza City,s neighborhoods are nearly empty, except for gunmen, as of 1600 on June 13 and that they are hearing regular automatic gunfire in most of the city,s neighborhoods. They report that snipers and machine-gun teams occupy nearly all residential and commercial high-rise buildings and all structures near the main security square, where the al-Saraya NSF HQ is located. Reports indicate that the majority of these gunmen are Hamas and some are Fatah. NSF contacts report sporadic gunfire and Hamas probes against al-Saraya,s security positions.

3. (SBU) General Intelligence (Mukhabarat) contacts report heavy fire on their HQ in al-Sudaniya, Gaza City as of 1600 local on June 13. (Note: UNRWA, whose office is in al-Sudaniya, corroborates reports of major fighting around the Mukhabarat compound. End note). There is regular shooting (including sniper fire from nearby buildings) at and around the PSO,s HQ in Tal al-Hawa, Gaza City, but PASF contacts do not report indications of an imminent assault on the compound.

4. (SBU) Hamas spokesmen accused Fatah militiamen of burning several houses and stores owned by Hamas members in Gaza City on June 13. Hamas took over the al-Muqawsi residential tower, home to several senior Fatah/PASF leaders, mid-day on June 13, after heavy Hamas-NSF fighting that killed at least 6 Palestinians. UNRWA reports one of its Gaza City employees was shot and killed in a crossfire mid-day on June 13.

(Note: another UNRWA employee was killed in similar circumstances in Khan Yunis, see para. 8. End note).

Peace Demonstrations
Fail to Calm Violence

¶5. (U) Demonstrators organized by MG Burhan Hamad (Egyptian GIS, security representative) and several civil society groups confronted armed gunmen in Gaza City's streets, and in several cases were chased off by gunfire. Gunmen shot and injured at least four demonstrators on the afternoon of June 13 (several others were reportedly beaten). Gunmen from Hamas and Fatah exchanged fire when demonstrators approached a contested area near the al-Muqawsi and al-Karamah towers.

Ongoing NSF-Hamas Fighting
in Central Gaza

¶6. (SBU) Executive Force8 fighters fired at 3 NSF bases and the PSO HQ in Dayr al-Balah starting o/a 1200 on June 13, but security contacts report that the NSF repelled the attackers and that fighting died down to sporadic shooting by ¶1430. One Executive Force8 and one NSF soldier were killed and several from both sides injured in the attacks. PASF contacts also report fighting near NSF positions in al-Maghazi Refugee Camp, but said the NSF drove off the Hamas attackers.

At Least 11 Killed in Explosive
Attack on Khan Yunis PSO Base

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¶7. (SBU) Unconfirmed media and UN OCHA reports indicate that an explosive tunnel detonated under the PSO HQ in Khan Yunis mid-day June 13 and killed at least 11 PASF members. PASF contacts report heavy fighting near both the PSO and Mukhabarat headquarters in Khan Yunis, but the Hamas military-wing publicly claims to have seized these positions.

¶8. (SBU) UNRWA contacts report that an UNRWA local employee was shot and killed when trapped in a shootout between Hamas and PASF gunmen on June 13. UNRWA has suspended operations except for emergency medical and food distribution in the Gaza Strip until the situation calms.

West Bank: Hamas Members Shot,
Taken Hostage by Fatah Gunmen

¶9. (SBU) The al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade in Ramallah abducted a Hamas activist, Muhammad Maharaq and released a video to local media showing Maharaq surrounded by masked gunmen who threatened to execute him if Hamas continues its attacks in Gaza. Security contacts report that Fatah gunmen shot and damaged the office of al-Umariya Charitable Society while kidnapping Maharaq.

¶10. (SBU) NSF contacts report that al-Aqsa Brigades gunmen abducted 11 Hamas activists in a Nablus Hamas office mid-day June 13 and shot and injured at least 2 Hamas members as of 1600 local. Ma'an News network reports that al-Aqsa Brigades threatened to strike back at West Bank Hamas within 12 hours if aggression against Fatah and security officials does not cease in Gaza.8 Al-Aqsa Brigades gunmen raided pro-Hamas television producer al-Sana's offices on June 13, ending its operations. Local contacts report that Nablus, streets are largely empty due to fear of factional violence.

WALLES